

Wash-Out

by ZilchNil

Category: Halo
Genre: Adventure, Sci-Fi
Language: English
Characters: F. Mendez, Kurt-051
Status: Completed
Published: 2013-05-15 06:34:19
Updated: 2013-05-15 06:34:19
Packaged: 2016-04-27 04:14:52
Rating: K
Chapters: 1
Words: 1,495
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: Recently re-read "Ghosts of Onyx" and this idea popped into my head.

Wash-Out

Didn't spend much time on this but I had to get it out of my head and decided to post it here. Most of the dialogue has been slightly changed from the book for legal purposes but I tried to stay true to the source material. Dont own anything.

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><p>Adam shuttered as he stood in the shadow of the pelican; a cool breeze nipping at the back of his neck. Under normal circumstances the breeze would be a calming element but these most defiantly were not "normal circumstances." He began to ponder his decisions over the past few days but before he could form coherent thought a deep, booming voice resonated, "Recruits, fall out!"<p>

The voice belonged to a rather short but serious man with a war-torn face and greying hair. A second "thing" came out from behind the serious man; Adam had failed to spot it due to the dimming light. "Attention, recruits," the man said "but how could it be a man? It easily stood above seven feet and was encased in olive-green armor, reminiscent of a scorpion tank. "My name is Lieutenant Ambrose." The giant continued. "You have all endured many hardships to be here. I know that each of you has had your loved ones taken from you on Jericho VII, Harvest, and Biko; that the Covenant has made orphans of you all."

Adams interest peaked at these words and the all too familiar feelings of rage, grief, and despair came rushing back. Clouded memories of his mother in her garden and his father greeting him as he came home from school began to flow through his mind. Now both were gone, killed; no murdered before his eyes. He was brought back

to the moment as the giant started back. "I am going to give you an opportunity to learn how to fight, a chance to become the best that the UNSC has ever created, a chance to destroy those that have wronged you. I am going to give you a chance to be like me: a Spartan."

Adam instinctually took a step toward the giant to get a better look at the mechanized warrior. This enabled him to take in all the details of the armor. It must have seen hundreds of battles, with numerous dents, dings, and plasma burns. "We cannot accept all of you, however," it continued. "There are five hundred of you and only three hundred available training positions. So tonight, Senior Chief Petty Officer Mendez" — he indicated with a slight nod of his head to the serious man — "has devised a way to separate those who truly want this opportunity from those of you who do not.", he finished by handing the serious man a tablet reader.

"You want to be Spartans? Then get back on those drop ships!" He barked at the children, but there was no movement as everyone refused to move out of shock.

"No? I guess we found us a few washouts. You!" He pointed toward Adam as the young boy looked around second guessing Mendez's intention. "You! And you!" Adam and the other children singled out exchanged quick glances with each other, then toward the ground and in unison shook their heads.

"No?" he questioned again. "Then get on those Pelicans!" Adam obeyed and slowly made his way back onto the drop ship with the others forming a semi-consistent line as the additional instructors strapped a large, black backpack on each of them.

Adam stood there, back within the cold titanium walls of the Pelican. He noticed the man called Mendez give orders to the three dozen or so other men and then exchange words with the armored giant. Adam strained his ears, but couldn't quite catch what they were saying. Something about "making them drop" and "motivation". Adam was so focused on trying to comprehend what they were saying that he failed to notice the boy nudging him.

"Hello? Anyone there? I said my name's Shane what's yours?" the boy questioned as he waved a hand in Adam's face.

He shook his head to snap out of his stupor. "A-Adam." He replied as he looked the boy over. Shane was about half a foot taller than he was with light auburn hair and dark eyes.

"So, which one are you?" Shane continued.

"Huh?" Adam asked not fully understanding.

"Like the Green Knight said; we're all from Harvest, Jericho, or Biko. Which are you?" the auburn haired boy explained.

"Oh, umm, Jericho. You?" Adam responded.

"Harvest." He answered.

The boy went to further question Adam but the small amount of chatter ceased as CPO Mendez boarded the craft. "Check your straps." he

growled at the children as the Pelican roared to life and began lifting off.

Adam saw Shane tug at the clasps on his pack and decided to mimic him. "Report any looseness." the man commanded.

Adam double checked his straps and made sure they were nice and snug. "Recruits, stand by." Mendez directed as he listened for the all clear signal to begin the drop. A green light appeared above his head and his fingers danced across a keypad.

The ramp to the Pelican rustled open, and the drop ship was filled with the sound of the roaring wind and ear-piercing screams. Adam couldn't help but yell and noticed the other children did as well as they pushed and shoved their way away from the opening. The man stood with his back to the open bay door unflinching and unafraid. "You will form a line and jump," he shouted over the screaming wind. "You will count to ten and pull on this." He indicated toward the bright red handle on his left shoulder. "Some confusion will be normal." he assured them.

Adam thought that was an understatement as he was already confused as to whether the man was serious or not. Evidently so were the other children, or they were just afraid, as none of them moved from their positions. "If you fail to do this, you cannot be a Spartan. It is your choice." Mendez insisted.

A young girl with short pigtails shoved her way to the front and yelled, "I'll go first, sir."

"Good girl," he responded. "Go right to the edge; hang on to the guide line."

She took tiny baby steps to get to the edge, hesitated for a few seconds and then jumped. The wind caught her and she vanished from view.

"Next!" ordered Mendez.

As the children slowly formed a line, Adam was somehow pushed to the front. He slowly edged his way toward the edge of the ramp, each step causing the panic to build within him, cautiously peered into the darkness, and fell backward yelling "No! No Way!"

The serious man didn't even look at Adam as he trembled on the deck, "Next." he called.

The next two boys didn't even hesitate as they got to the edge and leapt. Now it was Shane's turn. "Hurry up, loser." the boy behind him said and gave him a slight shove.

Shane glanced down at Adam and then made his way to the edge and froze. He couldn't do it; after all this was insane, he took a small step backwards but before he could fully back out the boy behind him shoved again, "Go, dumbass." Shane eyes seemed to double in size as he stumbled and then fell off the ramp disappearing into the night.

There was only one other boy to back out. Mendez glared at them both and then fooled with his headset. "Sir, all recruits have dropped."

He spoke into the head set, "Only two, sir. Alright, we'll rendezvous with you in five minutes, Mendez out."

Nothing else was said on the ride back. As Adam and the other young boy un-boarded the pelican they were motioned toward a warthog where the giant stood. "This will take you to launch site omega, where you will be transported back to your respective planets and homes." the giant explained as the children drew near.

The first boy climbed aboard the warthog without hesitation, but as Adam got to the warthog he paused, turned toward the giant and peered up at its faceplate. "I'm sorry, sir." he stammered and then lowered his head. "I didn't mean to fail you."

The Spartan looked the small boy over. "You know it doesn't have to end here." He said in a reassuring voice. "You can still join the fight; become a pilot, a marine, maybe even an ODST."

The boy looked at the giant one last time, gave a half-hearted smile and climbed aboard the Warthog. The driver didn't hesitate as the boys took their seat, flooring it and soon the compound disappeared from view and along with it Shane, the giant, and the rest of the Spartan III candidates.

End
file.